

Towns celebrate library grants

Plan to convert ex-school wins \$2.1M in state aid

By John Chaffee
The Patriot Ledger

DUXBURY — An exuberant crowd of library supporters and town officials gathered at the Great China restaurant last night to celebrate the awarding of a \$2.1 million state grant to help convert an empty former school into a new public library.

"Duxbury just got even better," library trustee Lynn Walsh said.

"It's a great day for the town," Selectmen Chairman Friend Weiler said. "It's one thing to get a new library, it's even better to get it for half-price."

Weiler referred to the fact that the town will have to borrow only \$3 million of the projected \$6.3 million cost of the conversion project. The state grant, plus a \$200,000 federal grant received last year, plus \$1 million that is expected to be raised privately, will pay for the rest.

Rodger Smith, chairman of the capital campaign, said pledges totaling \$200,000 already have been received — one-fifth of the goal of \$1 million in private contributions. Several prospective donors were waiting only for word on the state grant, he said.

"We know that the town is generous and we expect to meet our goal," Smith said. The money he raises will be used to equip and furnish the new library.

The library will be housed in the former upper Alden School, which was constructed in 1927 as Duxbury High School. It will overlook a campus of municipal buildings, including two

Duxbury

schools and a public swimming pool.

The new facility will provide triple the current library's 12,000 square feet of floor space. In addition, it will be handicapped-accessible, and will include public meeting rooms that will be available for use even when the library is closed.

The former school, an imposing red-brick building, has been empty for the past three years.

"If it hadn't become a library, it would quickly have become an eyesore," said John Tuffy, a member of the fiscal advisory committee.

Tuffy said the state grant was something of a mixed blessing: "Now that we've gotten it, we have to decide what to do with the existing library."

Town Manager Rocco Longo, who will oversee the conversion project, said he will form an ad hoc committee to look into future uses for the existing library. The committee chairman will be John Truelove, a lawyer and member of the fiscal advisory committee, Longo said.

Possible uses for the present library include a teen center and quarters for the council on aging.

Debbie Bornheimer, chairwoman of the library building committee, and Jane Bradley, chairwoman of library trustees, said they expect that the conversion project will be put out to bid before the end of this year and that the new library will be in use by the end of 1996.

The owners of the house where the famous Fall River murders occurred are exploring opening it to tourists, like the Salem Witch Museum.

DTC - ALDEN PROJECT

Local libraries get state grants

LIBRARIES

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The Boston Public Library got a \$7 million grant, almost 30 percent of the money awarded.

Seventy-one applications were reviewed by outside "peer review" groups, the state library board staff, and the board of commissioners.

State library building consultant Patience Jackson said Abington and Carver got their money partly because their current buildings "are so bad in their present condition."

But, she said, those libraries and Duxbury's presented well-thought-out, 20-year community service plans.

The awards left trustees and directors from the three towns beaming.

"We've worked so hard on this," Debbie Bornheimer, the chairman of the Duxbury library's building committee, said.

Abington trustee Ellen Regan said: "We are very, very happy. I can't wait to go back with the news."

The three towns now must pay the local share of the projects.

Town meeting in Duxbury already has voted to borrow \$3 million for the local share of its project. Bornheimer said the library hopes to award a construction contract by the end of this year and have the project finished by the end of next year.

In Carver, town meeting will vote on a \$2 million appropriation in September, after having voted in June to support the library if it got the state money. Trustee Chairman Dorothy McElaney said the board has no building schedule yet.

Abington will vote on a \$2 million Proposition 2½ debt-exclusion override in the fall.

State library consultant Jackson said Hingham's plan to expand its library into the town hall wasn't detailed or long-range enough to qualify for a grant.

Hanover's proposed expansion was mainly a casualty of what Jackson termed "cutthroat competition" for a limited amount of state construction money.

"It doesn't mean anybody had a bad project," she said of those two applications.

Hanover, Jackson noted, won a \$1.1 million grant in 1989 with virtually the same proposal the town submitted this year. But the Hanover library had to give that grant back when town meeting voted against paying the local

Winners, losers

Communities receiving grants from the state Board of Library Commissioners and those turned down:

WINNERS

- Milton — \$2.8 million, new building; total project, \$9.2 million.
- Duxbury — \$2.1 million, conversion; total project, \$6.1 million.
- Carver — \$1.4 million, new building; total project, \$3.4 million.
- Abington — \$1.3 million, new building; total project, \$3.6 million.
- Kingston — \$161,500, repayment for 1994 construction.

LOSERS

- Quincy — \$4.2 million, expansion and renovation; total project, \$13.5 million.
- Hanover — \$1.4 million, expansion; total project, \$3.4 million.
- Hingham — \$1.3 million, expansion; total project, \$2.8 million.
- Hull — \$35,000, access for disabled.
- Stoughton — \$20,000, access for disabled.

share. That made yesterday's rejection doubly disappointing for the library director, Lorraine Welsh.

"We've done as much as we can in the current building," Welsh said after the Framingham meeting. "The expansion has to be done. We'll apply for the next round, and hopefully we'll win."

The state will give out another \$20 million in grants next year.

"This is a bump in the road, a delay," said Dennis Corcoran, the Hingham library director.

Stedman Murdy, chairman of the library's board of trustees, said the board may ask the town to use \$800,000 in already committed funds for a modest expansion of the existing library.

"One way or the other, we want to improve what we have," Murdy said. "We clearly need the space."

incomplete library stuff